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MEN'S SOCIAL CLUBS AT OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

A Paper
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For the Course 483

by
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When Ouachita Baptist was founded in 1886, only thirty-one of the seventy national fraternities of today were in operation. None of these thirty-one had seen fit to install a chapter in Arkansas.

In many colleges a different type of society had developed, the literary society. Some were secret and some were not. Their object was training and drill in composition and oratory. Their exercises consisted of debates, orations, essays, and the reading and discussion of papers on literary subjects.

Ouachita had two such societies for men by 1888, the Philomathean Literary Society and the Hermesian Literary Society. These societies were non-secret, and they were encouraged and endorsed by the faculty. They were given prominent places in the college catalogues. Students joined them as a matter of course; their work was mainly educational. The entire student body was divided about equally between them. Their rivalries were fierce at times, competition being keen on the occasion of joint debate, as it was within the individual societies in anticipation of "publics". The meetings afforded opportunity for promoting acquaintance among the students, but usually the societies were too large to foster close friendships.

The need for a closer organization gave rise in 1913 to Delta Delta Kappa, Ouachita's first real fraternity. The D. D. K. operated in a dangerous atmosphere, for all secret societies and clubs were against Ouachita regulations. In 1915 the administration closed down all such secret societies along with the eating clubs and true social clubs, and the D. D. K. was killed despite its efforts and protest. Although one sorority was formed during the ban on clubs, no fraternity came into being until 1928. In 1928 an organization called the Knights of Psi Sigma Phi appeared in the Ouachitonian. It appeared again in the 1931 annual, along with a secret society calling itself the S. L. V. Nothing further is known of either society.

The foundations of today's system came into being in 1935 when the Red Shirts and the S. A. S., or Sigma Alpha Sigma, were chartered on campus. Sigma Alpha Sigma had its beginnings off campus in 1932, while the Red Shirts or Rho Sigma was originally intended as an athletic fraternity and was founded in 1933. While these organizations are called "social clubs" by the college, they are really fraternities.

Only two other fraternities have been established at Ouachita. In 1941 Beta Beta was organized. Alpha Omega Eta completed the present-day foursome when it was founded in 1953. While Ouachita doesn't allow national fraternities, it has four local fraternities that are, to a great extent, patterned after the nationals.

The university's social clubs are mutually exclusive, self-perpetuating groups of friends which organize the social

life of their members in college as a contributing factor to their educational program. Membership is drawn exclusively from the undergraduate body of the institution.

The names of the fraternities are composed of two or three Greek letters. These letters commonly represent a name or motto, which is supposed to be unknown to all except the fraternity's members and which indicates briefly the purposes or aims of the organization.

The constant rivalry for membership among the clubs has led to an indiscriminate scramble for members each year. The fraternities and the university have perceived the shortcomings of this sort of "rushing", as the contest for members is called, and are constantly striving to set up a system which will permit the sensible recruitment of new members. The deferred pledging of students until a fixed date and the deferred initiation of pledge members until they have completed a prescribed portion of their college course and secured a predetermined grade have been adopted.

Most of Ouachita's social clubs are old enough to admit the children of early members; therefore, frequently a student before enrolling at Ouachita has already decided, if opportunity comes, to join the fraternity to which his father, uncle, brother, or other relatives belonged during his college life. "Legacies" of this type give some fraternities representation for successive generations.

In some instances men have been elected to honorary membership for the distinction conferred upon the fraternities by the addition of their names. Elections of this class of

members have been prohibited by some of the fraternities.

Before World War II the fraternities prospered and membership rosters increased year by year even though they were select, but the war depleted the fraternity memberships as most of the members joined the various branches of service. Many of them gave their lives.

With the close of World War II fraternity membership zoomed as men flocked back to the campus not only to resume their studies, but to enjoy college and fraternity life. These service men brought a serious attitude toward their courses, an impatience with juvenile hazing tactics, and an appreciation of the real values of fraternity life. During the years that followed, the social clubs increased the range of their activities, placing more emphasis on campus and community service and less on individual parties for fraternity members alone.

Obstacles to fraternity growth at Ouachita are numerous. Because of the fraternities secrecy and selectivity, they suffer from public mistrust. Clannishness and snobbishness have always been charges leveled at fraternities and not always without cause.

The administration of Ouachita has never been overly fond of the social clubs and frequently tries to control the actions of the four clubs. Since self-government is an important facet of fraternity life the limitations imposed by the administration work harm on the fraternities and create distrust between the two.

Journalist have frequently prophesied the death of fraternities, basing their claims on declines in membership which periodically occur. Too, the news media often ignores the good work of the fraternities and plays up the unfortunate and bad incidents out of proportion.

Since most fraternities are by force of tradition secret in their character, copies of the rituals are guarded; however, all have at one time or another had badges. These are shields of gold displaying upon them the fraternity name together with symbols of general or peculiar significance and worn as pins.

In addition to the badges most of the fraternities have chosen distinctive colors, flowers, coats of arms, and other symbolic insignia.

All of Ouachita's social clubs issue certificates of membership, like diplomas. One club, EAE, gives membership cards to be carried in the wallet for identification purposes.

Ouachita's fraternities have always worn club apparel, starting with the red shirts of Rho Sigma and continuing to the blazers and sweatshirts worn today. One day a week, usually Wednesday, all clubs wear their particular apparel.

The university policy does not permit fraternity houses. Occasionally, several members of a fraternity live together off campus, providing they meet off campus regulations.

Rho Sigma, popularly known as the Red Shirts, was founded in 1933 at Ouachita Baptist College. It is Arkansas' oldest local fraternity. Originally intended as an athletic fraternity, Rho Sigma was organized by two men, William Ross Shuffield and John Floyd, on the back porch of Old North Dormitory, which has since been demolished. The early members felt that the fraternity should have members from every phase of college activity, a wish that has been carried out through the years. The fraternity became social in nature and was chartered at Ouachita on March 6, 1935, the first fraternity on campus. The original purpose was to better Ouachita through a better school spirit. As the fraternity prospered the purpose grew. Athletic improvement, friendship among the student body, scholastic recognition, and social recreation are among the other goals of Rho Sigma.

The Fraternity was strong from the start and gained prestige year by year. It has declined several offers by national fraternities to become a national chapter.

Members are called Red Shirts or Rho Sigs.

The tradition of the Founding is perpetuated in the Founders' Day Banquet or Spring Outing held annually as near as possible to March 6. Today's red blazers, the first such fraternity wear on campus, are worn proudly each Wednesday to further commemorate the Founding. They replaced the first clubwear on campus, the red shirts and white ties.

Several activities are traditional. The Red Shirts traditionally promote Tiger spirit with their Victory Bell, the Spirit Hoop and Tiger Trail, and group support at away games. Their red cowbells are famous throughout the state. Another athletics--boosting activity is the annual presentation of the Rab Rodgers Memorial Football Award to the outstanding senior player of the annual Ouachita--Henderson football games as selected by the team. Besides their campus social activities and spirit boosting pep rallies, the Shirts take an active role in campus and community service, particularly their work in cooperation with the Red Cross. This has netted them several special awards.

Another facet of the versatile Red Shirts is their fine intramural sports record. The Red Shirts have the best overall record on campus and have won several contests with fraternities from other colleges.

The original purpose is still in use, and the history and traditions of the fraternity in its earlier years have survived and are perpetuated in its present life.

The badge of the fraternity, worn by the members, has remained virtually unchanged since its inception in 1939. It is diamond-shaped and bears on a groundwork of red enamel the Greek letters "Rho" and "Sigma." A guard is usually attached. The colors of the fraternity are red and white, and the flower is the rose.

Pledges of Rho Sigma wear red pledge boards or plaques around their necks called "Shmoes." A red beanie, a red

tie, and white shirt and one red and one white sock complete the garb. Paddles were used in early years but were discontinued under faculty disapproval. Red Shirt pledges traditionally have their hair dyed red during pledgeship.

The fraternity elects no honorary members.

Sigma Alpha Sigma was founded on the second floor of the Caddo Hotel in Arkadelphia, 1932, by twelve boys. Chief of these was Joe Bill Gillespie, Jr., who had written the club song and creed. Gillespie was elected to serve as the first president after the Sigma Alpha Sigma was reorganized as a serious organization on November 12, 1935. He is the acknowledged founder of the S. A. S. The organization stressed secrecy, and professed as its early purpose the promotion of good fellowship and better living among the student body.

Members are called S's or Sig Alphas. R

Respecting the value of traditions, the S. A. S. has preserved the original club song, grip, and the original creed intact. The badge of the fraternity is basically unchanged also. It is a gold equilateral triangle, and bears on a groundwork of blue enamel, the Greek letters Sigma Alpha Sigma, one in each corner. It is bordered by pearls. Wearing of the badge by members has been discontinued, and it is now worn only by the president.

Both alumni support and loyalty are a cherished tradition. Sigma Alpha Sigma has been a leader in the formation of alumni associations at Ouachita.

Sigma Alpha Sigma awards the Jerry Forehand Memorial Award to the outstanding senior basketball player each year. The S's also have maintained the school spirit cannon since the mid-Sixties.

The S. A. S. claims ancestry to a Four Roses Society which allegedly dated back to the Civil War. The flower,

therefore, is the rose. The S. A. S. also has a flag, the coat of arms in blue centered on a white background. Colors are blue and white.

Clubwear today is a navy blue blazer. Past clubwear consisted of a white slipover sweater, a white shirt, and a blue tie. The sweater has the Greek letters monogrammed diagonally across the front. Pledges wear black suits, bowties, and monogrammed top hats. White shirts and blue signs with the Greek letters complete the garb.

Honorary members are from time to time elected to membership.

Beta Beta was chartered at Ouachita College on December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. A group of compatible young men, most of them ministerial candidates, who sought brotherhood. Rho Sigma and Sigma Alpha Sigma already existed on campus, but they didn't often accept ministerial students. Beta Beta was formed to break down the non-associational barrier between the ministerial and lay students. Charter members were Ermen Webb, Edmond Walker, Andy Hall, David Moore, Bill Montgomery, John Parrott, Lehman Webb, Lawson Hatfield, Pay Mosley, Wayne Ward, Wade Armstrong, and Delbert McAtee. These twelve men are honored in the traditions of the organization as its founders.

Members are called Betas.

Participation by active members in religious activities and high scholarship are emphasized as a definite club policy. There are, however, no discriminatory bars in the by-laws of the club, regardless of race, creed, or color. Scholastic achievement is a policy and a tradition in the club. The club also maintains a relative balance between the number of ministerial and lay students who are members of the club.

A traditional asset of the club is the serenading of the women's dormitories and the song, "Beta Beta Girl," sung to dropmates of Betas. The club also has a secret handshake.

The Beta badge is no longer used. Powder blue or black blazers are today's traditional clubwear. Past

clubwear consisted of monogrammed handkerchiefs and ties.

Pledges wear black suits and bowties with white shirts.

Colors are black and white.

Alpha Omega Eta was founded in March, 1953, and chartered at Ouachita by the faculty on April 16, 1953. The eight charter members were Eugen Keeland, Tommy Gilbert, James Sherwood, James Shankle, James Whitten, Robert Sims, Jerry Pugsley, and Cartisle Phillips. Two of these, Sherwood and Whitten, were former members of Sigma Alpha Sigma. Dissention in that club had led to their withdrawal. Considering the condition in the S. A. S. incompatible with their ideas of unity and fellowship and, being close friends, determined to build anew for their future unity and fellowship and to form a fraternity with members bound by honor to live as Christian gentlemen. Accordingly, Alpha Omega Eta was organized, with Honor as its cardinal principle.

The original purpose of Alpha Omega Eta was "endeavoring to improve the social status of Ouachita College as a whole, and to harmonize the relationship between the faculty and the student body."

Members are called A. O. E.'s.

The motto of Alpha Omega Eta is "Honor--First, last, and Always." The A. O. E. also has a creed, club song, and a badge. All are out of use.

Alpha Omega Eta elects honorary members periodically. They do not have the right to hold office. Honorary bids are also extended occasionally.

Clubwear is an olive green blazer. Pledges carry wooden scimitar swords painted in the fraternity colors.

Other pledgewear varies from year to year.

Colors are presently green and gold. The original colors were green and white. In 1959 they were changed to "Rebel grey" and white. The colors were changed to the present green and gold in 1963.

In the mid-Fifties the A. O. E.'s suffered a brief period of inactivity. They were reactivated in 1956 by the Ouachita Student Senate to meet the need for another men's club.

For this study each past Signal and Ouachitotian was searched for information concerning men's social clubs. In addition, an interview was held with Dr. George Blackmon.